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"I come
to present the
strong claims of
suffering humanity"

D.L.Dix

RECREATION OF THE MESSAGE OF DOROTHEA LINDE DIX
TO THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE 1843

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Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts 1843

By DOROTHEA L. DIX.

Gentlemen,—I respectfully ask to present this Memorial, believing that the *cause*, which actuates to and sanctions so unusual a movement, presents no equivocal claim to public consideration and sympathy. Surrendering to calm and deep convictions of duty my habitual views of what is womanly and becoming, I proceed briefly to explain what has conducted me before you unsolicited and unsustained, trusting, while I do so, that the memorialist will be speedily forgotten in the memorial.

About two years since leisure afforded opportunity and duty prompted me to visit several prisons and almshouses in the vicinity of this metropolis. I found, near Boston, in the jails and asylums for the poor, a numerous class brought into unsuitable connection with criminals and the general mass of paupers. I refer to idiots and insane persons, dwelling in circumstances not only adverse to their own physical and moral improvement, but productive of extreme disadvantages to all other persons brought into association with them. I applied myself diligently to trace the causes of these evils, and sought to supply remedies. As one obstacle was surmounted, fresh difficulties appeared. Every new investigation has given depth to the conviction that it is only by decided, prompt, and vigorous legislation the evils to which I refer, and which I shall proceed more fully to illustrate, can be remedied. I shall be obliged to speak with great plainness, and to reveal many things revolting to the taste, and from

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which my woman's nature shrinks with peculiar sensitiveness. But truth is the highest consideration. *I tell what I have seen*—painful and shocking as the details often are—that from them you may feel more deeply the imperative obligation which lies upon you to prevent the possibility of a repetition or continuance of such outrages upon humanity. If I inflict pain upon you, and move you to horror, it is to acquaint you with sufferings which you have the power to alleviate, and make you hasten to the relief of the victims of legalized barbarity.

I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane, and idiotic men and women; of beings sunk to a condition from which the most unconcerned would start with real horror; of beings wretched in our prisons, and more wretched in our almshouses. And I cannot suppose it needful to employ earnest persuasion, or stubborn argument, in order to arrest and fix attention upon a subject only the more strongly pressing in its claims because it is revolting and disgusting in its details.

I must confine myself to few examples, but am ready to furnish other and more complete details, if required. If my pictures are displeasing, coarse, and severe, my subjects, it must be recollected, offer no tranquil, refined, or composing features. The condition of human beings, reduced to the extremest states of degradation and misery, cannot be exhibited in softened language, or adorn a polished page.

I proceed, gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the *present* state of insane persons confined within this Commonwealth, in *cages*, *closets*, *cellars*, *stalls*, *pens! Chained*, *naked*, *beaten with rods*, and *lashed* into obedience.

As I state cold, severe *facts*, I feel obliged to refer to persons, and definitely to indicate localities. But it is upon my subject, not upon localities or individuals, I desire to fix attention; and I would speak as kindly as possible of all wardens, keepers, and other responsible officers, believing that *most* of these have erred not through hardness of heart and wilful cruelty so much as want of skill and knowledge, and want of consideration. Familiarity with suffering, it is said, blunts the sensibilities, and where neglect once finds a footing other injuries are multiplied. This is not all, for it may justly and strongly be added that, from the deficiency of adequate means to meet the wants of

these cases, it has been an absolute impossibility to do justice in this matter. Prisons are not constructed in view of being converted into county hospitals, and almshouses are not founded as receptacles for the insane. And yet, in the face of justice and common sense, wardens are by law compelled to receive, and the masters of almshouses not to refuse, insane and idiotic subjects in all stages of mental disease and privation.

It is the Commonwealth, not its integral parts, that is accountable for most of the abuses which have lately and do still exist. I repeat it, it is defective legislation which perpetuates and multiplies these abuses. In illustration of my subject, I offer the following extracts from my Note-book and Journal:—

Springfield. In the jail, one lunatic woman, furiously mad, a State pauper, improperly situated, both in regard to the prisoners, the keepers, and herself. It is a case of extreme self-forgetfulness and oblivion to all the decencies of life, to describe which would be to repeat only the grossest scenes. She is much worse since leaving Worcester. In the almshouse of the same town is a woman apparently only needing judicious care, and some well-chosen employment, to make it unnecessary to confine her in solitude, in a dreary unfurnished room. Her appeals for employment and companionship are most touching, but the mistress replied "she had no time to attend to her."

Northampton. In the jail, quite lately, was a young man violently mad, who had not, as I was informed at the prison, come under medical care, and not been returned from any hospital. In the almshouse the cases of insanity are now unmarked by abuse, and afford evidence of judicious care by the keepers.

Williamsburg. The almshouse has several insane, not under suitable treatment. No apparent intentional abuse.

Rutland. Appearance and report of the insane in the almshouse not satisfactory.

Sterling. A terrible case; manageable in a hospital; at present as well controlled perhaps as circumstances in a case so extreme allow. An almshouse, but wholly wrong in relation to the poor crazy woman, to the paupers generally, and to her keepers.

Burlington. A woman, declared to be very insane; decent room and bed; but not allowed to rise oftener, the mistress said, "than every other day: it is too much trouble."

Concord. A woman from the hospital in a cage in the almshouse. In the jail several, decently cared for in general, but

not properly placed in a prison. Violent, noisy, unmanageable most of the time.

Lincoln. A woman in a cage. *Medford.* One idiotic subject chained, and one in a close stall for seventeen years. *Pepperell.* One often doubly chained, hand and foot; another violent; several peaceable now. *Brookfield.* One man caged, comfortable. *Granville.* One often closely confined; now losing the use of his limbs from want of exercise. *Charlemont.* One man caged. *Savoy.* One man caged. *Lenox.* Two in the jail, against whose unfit condition there the jailer protests.

Dedham. The insane disadvantageously placed in the jail. In the almshouse, two females in stalls, situated in the main building; lie in wooden bunks filled with straw; always shut up. One of these subjects is supposed curable. The overseers of the poor have declined giving her a trial at the hospital, as I was informed, on account of expense.

Franklin. One man chained; decent. *Taunton.* One woman caged. *Plymouth.* One man stall-caged, from Worcester Hospital. *Scituate.* One man and one woman stall-caged. *West Bridgewater.* Three idiots. Never removed from one room. *Barnstable.* Four females in pens and stalls. Two chained certainly. I think all. Jail, one idiot. *Wellfleet.* Three insane. One man and one woman chained, the latter in a bad condition. *Brewster.* One woman violently mad, solitary. Could not see her, the master and mistress being absent, and the paupers in charge having strict orders to admit no one. *Rochester.* Seven insane; at present none caged. *Milford.* Two insane, not now caged. *Cohasset.* One idiot, one insane; most miserable condition. *Plympton.* One insane, three idiots; condition wretched.

Besides the above, I have seen many who, part of the year, are chained or caged. The use of cages all but universal. Hardly a town but can refer to some not distant period of using them; chains are less common; negligences frequent; wilful abuse less frequent than sufferings proceeding from ignorance, or want of consideration. I encountered during the last three months many poor creatures wandering reckless and unprotected through the country. Innumerable accounts have been sent me of persons who had roved away unwatched and unsearched after; and I have heard that responsible persons, controlling the almshouses, have not thought themselves culpable in sending away from their shelter, to cast upon the chances of remote relief,

insane men and women. These, left on the highways, unfriended and incompetent to control or direct their own movements, sometimes have found refuge in the hospital, and others have not been traced. But I cannot particularize. In traversing the State, I have found hundreds of insane persons in every variety of circumstance and condition, many whose situation could not and need not be improved; a less number, but that very large, whose lives are the saddest pictures of human suffering and degradation. I give a few illustrations; but description fades before reality.

Danvers. November. Visited the almshouse. A large building, much out of repair. Understand a new one is in contemplation. Here are from fifty-six to sixty inmates, one idiotic, three insane; one of the latter in close confinement at all times.

Long before reaching the house, wild shouts, snatches of rude songs, imprecations and obscene language, fell upon the ear, proceeding from the occupant of a low building, rather remote from the principal building to which my course was directed. Found the mistress, and was conducted to the place which was called "*the home*" of the *forlorn* maniac, a young woman, exhibiting a condition of neglect and misery blotting out the faintest idea of comfort, and outraging every sentiment of decency. She had been, I learnt, "a respectable person, industrious and worthy. Disappointments and trials shook her mind, and, finally, laid prostrate reason and self-control. She became a maniac for life. She had been at Worcester Hospital for a considerable time, and had been returned as incurable." The mistress told me she understood that, "while there, she was comfortable and decent." Alas, what a change was here exhibited! She had passed from one degree of violence to another, in swift progress. There she stood, clinging to or beating upon the bars of her caged apartment, the contracted size of which afforded space only for increasing accumulations of filth, a *foul* spectacle. There she stood with naked arms and dishevelled hair, the unwashed frame invested with fragments of unclean garments, the air so extremely offensive, though ventilation was afforded on all sides save one, that it was not possible to remain beyond a few moments without retreating for recovery to the outward air. Irritation of body, produced by utter filth and exposure, incited her to the horrid process of tearing off her skin by inches. Her face, neck, and person were thus disfigured to hideousness. She held up a fragment just

rent off. To my exclamation of horror, the mistress replied: "Oh, we can't help it. Half the skin is off sometimes. We can do nothing with her; and it makes no difference what she eats, for she consumes her own filth as readily as the food which is brought her."

It is now January. A fortnight since two visitors reported that most wretched outcast as "wallowing in dirty straw, in a place yet more dirty, and without clothing, without fire. Worse cared for than the brutes, and wholly lost to consciousness of decency." Is the whole story told? What was seen is: what is reported is not. These gross exposures are not for the pained sight of one alone. All, all, coarse, brutal men, wondering, neglected children, old and young, each and all, witness this lowest, foulest state of miserable humanity. And who protects her, that worse than Pariah outcast, from other wrongs and blacker outrages? I do not *know* that such *have been.* I do know that they are to be dreaded, and that they are not guarded against.

Some may say these things cannot be remedied, these furious maniacs are not to be raised from these base conditions. I *know* they are. Could give *many* examples. Let *one* suffice. A young woman, a pauper, in a distant town, Sandisfield, was for years a raging maniac. A cage, chains, and *the whip* were the agents for controlling her, united with harsh tones and profane language. Annually, with others (the town's poor), she was put up at auction, and bid off at the lowest price which was declared for her. One year, not long past, an old man came forward in the number of applicants for the poor wretch. He was taunted and ridiculed. "What would he and his old wife do with such a mere beast?" "My wife says yes," replied he, "and I shall take her." She was given to his charge. He conveyed her home. She was washed, neatly dressed, and placed in a decent bedroom, furnished for comfort and opening into the kitchen. How altered her condition! As yet *the chains* were not off. The first week she was somewhat restless, at times violent, but the quiet, kind ways of the old people wrought a change. She received her food decently, forsook acts of violence, and no longer uttered blasphemies or indecent language. After a week the chain was lengthened, and she was received as a companion into the kitchen. Soon she engaged in trivial employments. "After a fortnight," said the old man, "I knocked off the chains and made her a free woman." She is at times excited, but not violently. They are careful of her diet. They

keep her very clean. She calls them "father" and "mother." Go there now, and you will find her "clothed," and, though not perfectly in her "right mind," so far restored as to be a safe and comfortable inmate.

Newburyport. Visited the almshouse in June last. Eighty inmates. Seven insane, one idiotic. Commodious and neat house. Several of the partially insane apparently very comfortable. Two very improperly situated; namely, an insane man, not considered incurable, in an out-building, whose room opened upon what was called "the dead room," affording, in lieu of companionship with the living, a contemplation of corpses. The other subject was a woman in a *cellar.* I desired to see her. Much reluctance was shown. I pressed the request. The master of the house stated that she was *in the cellar;* that she was *dangerous to be approached;* that she had lately attacked his wife, and *was often naked.* I persisted, "If you will not go with me, give me the keys and I will go alone." Thus importuned, the outer doors were opened. I descended the stairs from within. A strange, unnatural noise seemed to proceed from beneath our feet. At the moment I did not much regard it. My conductor proceeded to remove a padlock, while my eye explored the wide space in quest of the poor woman. All for a moment was still. But judge my horror and amazement, when a door to a closet *beneath* the *staircase* was opened, revealing in the imperfect light a female apparently wasted to a skeleton, partially wrapped in blankets, furnished for the narrow bed on which she was sitting. Her countenance furrowed, not by age, but suffering, was the image of distress. In that contracted space, unlighted, unventilated, she poured forth the wailings of despair. Mournfully she extended her arms and appealed to me: "Why am I consigned to hell? dark—dark—I used to pray, I used to read the Bible—I have done no crime in my heart. I had friends. Why have all forsaken me!—my God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me!" Those groans, those wailings, come up daily, mingling with how many others, a perpetual and sad memorial. When the good Lord shall require an account of our stewardship, what shall all and each answer?

Perhaps it will be inquired how long, how many days or hours, was she imprisoned in these confined limits? *For years!* In another part of the cellar were other small closets, only better, because higher through the entire length, into one of which she

by turns was transferred, so as to afford opportunity for fresh whitewashing, etc.

Saugus. December 24. Thermometer below zero; drove to the poorhouse; was conducted to the master's family-room by himself; walls garnished with handcuffs and chains, not less than five pairs of the former; did not inquire how or on whom applied; thirteen pauper inmates; one insane man; one woman insane; one idiotic man; asked to see them; the two men were shortly led in; appeared pretty decent and comfortable. Requested to see the other insane subject; was denied decidedly; urged the request, and finally secured a reluctant assent. Was led through an outer passage into a lower room, occupied by the paupers; crowded; not neat; ascended a rather low flight of stairs upon an open entry, through the floor of which was introduced a stove-pipe, carried along a *few feet*, about six inches above the floor, through which it was reconveyed below. From this entry opens a room of moderate size, having a sashed window; floor, I think, painted; apartment *entirely* unfurnished; no chair, table, nor bed; neither, what is seldom missing, a bundle of straw or lock of hay; cold, very cold; the first movement of my conductor was to throw open a window, a measure imperatively necessary for those who entered. *On the floor* sat a woman, her limbs immovably contracted, so that the knees were brought upward to the chin; the face was concealed; the head rested on the folded arms. For clothing she appeared to have been furnished with *fragments* of many discharged garments. These were folded about her, yet they little benefited her, if one might judge by the constant shuddering which almost convulsed her poor crippled frame. Woful was this scene. Language is feeble to record the misery she was suffering and had suffered. In reply to my inquiry if she could not change her position, I was answered by the master in the negative, and told that the contraction of limbs was occasioned by "neglect and exposure in former years," but *since she had been crazy*, and before she fell under the charge, as I inferred, of her present *guardians*. Poor wretch! she, like many others, was an example of what humanity becomes when the temple of reason falls in ruins, leaving the mortal part to injury and neglect, and showing how much can be endured of privation, exposure, and disease without extinguishing the lamp of life.

Passing out, the man pointed to a something, revealed to more than one sense, which he called "her bed; and we throw

some blankets over her at night." Possibly this is done; others, like myself, might be pardoned a doubt if they could have seen all I saw and heard abroad all I heard. The *bed*, so called, was about *three* feet long, and from a half to three-quarters of a yard wide; of old ticking or tow cloth was the case; the contents might have been a *full handful* of hay or straw. My attendant's exclamations on my leaving the house were emphatic, and can hardly be repeated.

The above case recalls another of equal neglect or abuse. Asking my way to the almshouse in Berkeley, which had been repeatedly spoken of as greatly neglected, I was answered as to the direction, and informed that there were "plenty of insane people and idiots there." "Well taken care of?" "Oh, well enough for such sort of creatures!" "Any violently insane?" "Yes, my sister's son is there,—a real tiger. I kept him here at my house awhile, but it was too much trouble to go on: so I carried him there." "Is he comfortably provided for?" "Well enough." "Has he decent clothes?" "Good enough; wouldn't wear them if he had more." "Food?" "Good enough; good enough for him." "One more question,—has he the comfort of a fire?" "Fire! fire, indeed! what does a crazy man need of fire? Red-hot iron wants fire as much as he!" And such are sincerely the ideas of not a few persons in regard to the actual wants of the insane. Less regarded than the lowest brutes. No wonder they sink even lower.

Ipswich. Have visited the prison three several times; visited the almshouse once. In the latter are several cases of insanity; three especially distressing, situated in a miserable outbuilding, detached from the family-house, and confined in stalls or pens; three individuals, one of whom is apparently very insensible to the deplorable circumstances which surround him, and perhaps not likely to comprehend privations or benefits. Not so the person directly opposite to him, who looks up wildly, anxiously by turns, through those strong bars. Cheerless sight! strange companionship for the mind flitting and coming by turns to some perception of persons and things. He, too, is one of the returned incurables. His history is a sad one. I have not had all the particulars, but it shows distinctly what the most prosperous and affluent may come to be. I understand his connections are excellent and respectable; his natural abilities in youth were superior. He removed from Essex County to Albany, and was established there as the editor of a popular newspaper. In

course of time he was chosen a senator for that section of the State, and of course was [?] a judge in the Court of Errors.

Vicissitudes followed, and insanity closed the scene. He was conveyed to Worcester, after a considerable period, either to give place to some new patient or because the county objected to the continued expense, he, being declared incurable, was removed to Salem jail, thence to Ipswich jail; associated with the prisoners there, partaking the same food, and clad in like apparel. After a time the town complained of the expense of keeping him in jail. It was cheaper in the almshouse. To the almshouse he was conveyed, and there perhaps must abide. How sad a fate! I found him in a quiet state, though at times was told that he is greatly excited. What wonder, with such a companion before him, such cruel scenes within! I perceived in him some little confusion as I paused before the stall against the bars of which he was leaning. He was not so lost to propriety but that a little disorder of the bed-clothes, etc., embarrassed him. I passed on, but he asked, in a moment, earnestly, "Is the lady gone—gone quite away?" I returned. He gazed a moment without answering my inquiry if he wished to see me. "And have you, too, lost all your dear friends?" Perhaps my mourning apparel excited his inquiry. "Not all." "Have you any dear father and mother to love you?" and then he sighed and then laughed and traversed the limited stall. Immediately adjacent to this stall was one occupied by a *simple* girl, who was "put there to be out of harm's way." A cruel lot for this privation of a sound mind. A madman on the one hand, not so much separated as to secure decency; another almost opposite, and no screen. I do not know how it is argued that mad persons and idiots may be dealt with as if no spark of recollection ever lights up the mind. The observation and experience of those who have had charge of hospitals show opposite conclusions.

Violence and severity do but exasperate the insane: the only availing influence is kindness and firmness. It is amazing what these will produce. How many examples might illustrate this position! I refer to one recently exhibited in Barre. The town paupers are disposed of annually to some family who, for a stipulated sum, agree to take charge of them. One of them, a young woman, was shown to me well clothed, neat, quiet, and employed at needlework. Is it possible that this is the same being who, but last year, was a raving mad woman, exhibiting every degree of violence in action and speech; a very tigress

wrought to fury; caged, chained, beaten, loaded with injuries, and exhibiting the passions which an iron rule might be expected to stimulate and sustain. It is the same person. Another family hold her in charge who better understand human nature and human influences. She is no longer chained, caged, and beaten; but, if excited, a pair of mittens drawn over the hands secures from mischief. Where will she be next year after the annual sale?

It is not the insane subject alone who illustrates the power of the all-prevailing law of kindness. A poor idiotic young man, a year or two since, used to follow me at times through the prison as I was distributing books and papers. At first he appeared totally stupid, but cheerful expressions, a smile, a trifling gift, seemed gradually to light up the void temple of the intellect, and by slow degrees some faint images of thought passed before the mental vision. He would ask for books, though he could not read. I indulged his fancy, and he would appear to experience delight in examining them, and kept them with a singular care. If I read the Bible, he was reverently, wonderingly attentive; if I talked, he listened with a half-conscious aspect. One morning I passed more hurriedly than usual, and did not speak particularly to him. "Me, me, me a book." I returned. "Good morning, Jemmy: so you will have a book to-day? Well, keep it carefully." Suddenly turning aside, he took the bread brought for his breakfast, and, passing it with a hurried earnestness through the bars of his iron door, "Here's bread, ain't you hungry?" Never may I forget the tone and grateful affectionate aspect of that poor idiot. How much might we do to bring back or restore the mind if we but knew how to touch the instrument with a skilful hand!

My first visit to Ipswich prison was in March, 1842. The day was cold and stormy. The turnkey very obligingly conducted me through the various departments. Pausing before the iron door of a room in the jail, he said: "We have here a crazy man whose case seems hard; for he has sense enough to know he is in a prison and associated with prisoners. He was a physician in this county, and was educated at Cambridge, I believe. It was there or at one of the New England colleges. Should you like to see him?" I objected that it might be unwelcome to the sufferer, but, urged, went in. The apartment was very much out of order, neglected, and unclean. There was no fire. It had been forgotten amidst the press of other

duties. A man, a prisoner waiting trial, was sitting near a bed where the insane man lay, rolled in dirty blankets. The turnkey told him my name; and he broke forth into a most touching appeal that I would procure his liberation by prompt application to the highest State authorities. I soon retired, but communicated his condition to an official person before leaving the town, in the hope he might be rendered more comfortable. Shortly I received from this insane person, through my esteemed friend, Dr. Bell, several letters, from which I venture to make a few extracts. They are written from Ipswich, where is the general county receptacle for insane persons. I may remark that he has at different times been under skilful treatment, both at Charlestown and Worcester; but being, long since, pronounced incurable, and his property being expended, he became chargeable to the town or county, and was removed, first to Salem jail, thence to that at Ipswich by the desire of the high sheriff, who requested the commissioners to remove him to Ipswich as a more retired spot, where he would be less likely to cause disturbance. In his paroxysms of violence, his shouts and turbulence disturb a whole neighborhood. These still occur. I give the extracts literally: "Respected lady, since your heavenly visit my time has passed in perfect quietude, and for the last week I have been entirely alone. The room has been cleansed and whitewashed, and is now quite decent. I have read your books and papers with pleasure and profit, and retain them subject to your order. You say, in your note, others shall be sent if desired, and if any particular subject has interest it shall be procured. Your kindness is felt and highly appreciated," etc. In another letter he writes, "You express confidence that I have self-control and self-respect. I have, and, were I free and in good circumstances, could command as much as any man." In a third he says, "Your kind note, with more books and papers, were received on the 8th, and I immediately addressed to you letter superscribed to Dr. Bell; but, having discovered the letters on your seal, I suppose them the initials of your name, and now address you directly," etc.

The original letters may be seen. I have produced these extracts, and stated facts of personal history, in order that a judgment may be formed from few of many examples as to the justness of incarcerating lunatics in all and every stage of insanity, for an indefinite period or for life, in dreary prisons, and in connection with every class of criminals who may be lodged succes-

sively under the same roof, and in the same apartments. I have shown, from two examples, to what condition men may be brought, not through crime, but misfortune, and that misfortune embracing the heaviest calamity to which human nature is exposed. In the touching language of Scripture may these captives cry out: "Have pity upon me! Have pity upon me! for the hand of the Lord hath smitten me." "My kinsfolk have failed, and my own familiar friend hath forgotten me."

The last visit to the Ipswich prison was the third week in December. Twenty-two insane persons and idiots: general condition gradually improved within the last year. All suffer for want of air and exercise. The turnkey, while disposed to discharge kindly the duties of his office, is so crowded with business as to be positively unable to give any but the most general attention to the insane department. Some of the subjects are invariably confined in small dreary cells, insufficiently warmed and ventilated. Here one sees them traversing the narrow dens with ceaseless rapidity, or dashing from side to side like caged tigers, perfectly furious, through the invariable condition of unalleviated confinement. The case of one *simple* boy is peculiarly hard. Dec. 6, 1841, he was committed to the house of correction, East Cambridge, from Charlestown, as an *insane* or *idiotic* boy. He was unoffending, and competent to perform a variety of light labors under direction, and was often allowed a good deal of freedom in the open air. Sept. 6, 1842, he was directed to pull some weeds (which indulgence his harmless disposition permitted) without the prison walls, merely, I believe, for the sake of giving him a little employment. He escaped, it was thought, rather through sudden waywardness than any distinct purpose. From that time nothing was heard of him till in the latter part of December, while at Ipswich, in the common room, occupied by a portion of the lunatics not furiously mad, I heard some one say, "I know her, I know her," and with a joyous laugh John hastened toward me. "I'm so glad to see you, so glad to see you! I can't stay here long: I want to go out," etc. It seems he had wandered to Salem, and was committed as an insane or *idiot* boy. I cannot but assert that most of the idiotic subjects in the prisons in Massachusetts are unjustly committed, being wholly incapable of doing harm, and none manifesting any disposition either to injure others or to exercise mischievous propensities. I ask an investigation into this subject for the sake of many whose association with prisoners and

criminals, and also with persons in almost every stage of insanity, is as useless and unnecessary as it is cruel and ill-judged. If it were proper, I might place in your hands a volume, rather than give a page, illustrating these premises.

Sudbury. First week in September last I directed my way to the poor-farm there. Approaching, as I supposed, that place, all uncertainty vanished as to which, of several dwellings in view, the course should be directed. The terrible screams and imprecations, impure language and amazing blasphemies, of a maniac, now, as often heretofore, indicated the place sought after. I know not how to proceed The English language affords no combinations fit for describing the condition of the unhappy wretch there confined. In a stall, built under a woodshed on the road, was a naked man, defiled with filth, furiously tossing through the bars and about the cage portions of straw (the only furnishing of his prison) already trampled to chaff. The mass of filth within diffused wide abroad the most noisome stench. I have never witnessed paroxysms of madness so appalling: it seemed as if the ancient doctrine of the possession of demons was here illustrated. I hastened to the house overwhelmed with horror. The mistress informed me that ten days since he had been brought from Worcester Hospital, where the town did not choose any longer to meet the expenses of maintaining him; that he had been "dreadful noisy and dangerous to go near" ever since. It was hard work to give him food at any rate; for what was not immediately dashed at those who carried it was cast down upon the festering mass within. "He's a dreadful care; worse than all the people and work on the farm beside." "Have you any other insane persons?" "Yes: this man's sister has been crazy here for several years. She does nothing but take on about him; and maybe she'll grow as bad as he." I went into the adjoining room to see this unhappy creature. In a low chair, wearing an air of deepest despondence, sat a female no longer young; her hair fell uncombed upon her shoulders; her whole air revealed woe, unmitigated woe. She regarded me coldly and uneasily. I spoke a few words of sympathy and kindness. She fixed her gaze for a few moments steadily upon me, then grasping my hand, and bursting into a passionate flood of tears, repeatedly kissed it, exclaiming in a voice broken by sobs: "Oh, my poor brother, my poor brother. Hark, hear him, hear him!" then, relapsing into apathetic calmness, she neither spoke nor moved; but the tears again flowed

fast as I went away. I avoided passing the maniac's cage; but there, with strange curiosity and eager exclamations, were gathered, at a safe distance, the children of the establishment, little boys and girls, receiving their early lessons in hardness of heart and vice; but the demoralizing influences were not confined to children.

The same day revealed two scenes of extreme exposure and unjustifiable neglect, such as I could not have supposed the whole New England States could furnish.

Wayland. Visited the almshouse. There, as in Sudbury, caged in a wood-shed, and also *fully exposed* upon the *public* road, was seen a man at that time less violent, but equally debased by exposure and irritation. He then wore a portion of clothing, though the mistress remarked that he was "more likely to be naked than not"; and added that he was "less noisy than usual." I spoke to him, but received no answer. A wild, strange gaze, and impatient movement of the hand, motioned us away. He refused to speak, rejected food, and wrapped over his head a torn coverlet. Want of accommodations for the imperative calls of nature had converted the cage into a place of utter offence. "My husband cleans him out once a week or so; but it's a hard matter to master him sometimes. He does better since the last time he was broken in." I learnt that the confinement and cold together had so affected his limbs that he was often powerless to rise. "You see him," said my conductress, "in his best state." *His best state!* What, then, was the *worst?*

Westford. Not many miles from Wayland is a sad spectacle; was told by the family who kept the poorhouse that they had twenty-six paupers, one idiot, one simple, and one insane, an incurable case from Worcester Hospital. I requested to see her, but was answered that she "wasn't fit to be seen. She was naked, and made so much trouble they did not know how to get along." I hesitated but a moment. I must see her, I said. I cannot adopt descriptions of the condition of the insane secondarily. What I assert for fact, I must see for myself. On this I was conducted above stairs into an apartment of decent size, pleasant aspect from abroad, and tolerably comfortable in its general appearance; but the inmates —grant I may never look upon another such scene! A young woman, whose person was partially covered with portions of a blanket, sat upon the floor; her hair dishevelled; her naked arms crossed

languidly over the breast; a distracted, unsteady eye and low, murmuring voice betraying both mental and physical disquiet. *About the waist was a chain*, the extremity of which was fastened into the wall of the house. As I entered, she raised her eyes, blushed, moved uneasily, endeavoring at the same time to draw about her the insufficient fragments of the blanket. I knelt beside her and asked if she did not wish to be dressed. "Yes, I want some clothes." "But you'll tear 'em all up, you know you will," interposed her attendant. "No, I won't, I won't tear them off"; and she tried to rise, but the waist-encircling chain threw her back, and she did not renew the effort, but, bursting into a wild, shrill laugh, pointed to it, exclaiming, "See there, see there, nice clothes!" Hot tears might not dissolve that iron bondage, imposed, to all appearance, most needlessly. As I left the room, the poor creature said, "I want my gown." The response from the attendant might have roused to indignation one not dispossessed of reason and owning self-control.

Groton. A few rods removed from the poorhouse is a wooden building upon the roadside, constructed of heavy board and plank. It contains one room, unfurnished, except so far as a bundle of straw constitutes furnishing. There is no window, save an opening half the size of a sash, and closed by a board shutter. In one corner is some brick-work surrounding an iron stove, which in cold weather serves for warming the room. The occupant of this dreary abode is a young man, who has been declared incurably insane. He can move a measured distance in his prison; that is, so far as a strong, heavy chain, depending from an *iron collar which invests his neck* permits. In fine weather—and it was pleasant when I was there in June last—the door is thrown open, at once giving admission to light and air, and affording some little variety to the solitary in watching the passers-by. But that portion of the year which allows of open doors is not the chiefest part; and it may be conceived, without drafting much on the imagination, what is the condition of one who for days and weeks and months sits in darkness and alone, without employment, without object. It may be supposed that paroxysms of frenzy are often exhibited, and that the tranquil state is rare in comparison with that which incites to violence. This, I was told, is the fact.

I may here remark that severe measures, in enforcing rule, have in many places been openly revealed. I have not seen chastisement administered by stripes, and in but few instances

have I seen the *rods* and *whips*, but I have seen blows inflicted, both passionately and repeatedly.

I have been asked if I have investigated the causes of insanity. I have not; but I have been told that this most calamitous overthrow of reason often is the result of a life of sin: it is sometimes, but rarely, added, they must take the consequences; they deserve no better care. Shall man be more just than God, he who causes his sun and refreshing rains and life-giving influence to fall alike on the good and the evil? Is not the total wreck of reason, a state of distraction, and the loss of all that makes life cherished a retribution sufficiently heavy, without adding to consequences so appalling every indignity that can bring still lower the wretched sufferer? Have pity upon those who, while they were supposed to lie hid in secret sins, "have been scattered under a *dark veil of forgetfulness*, over whom is spread a heavy night, and who unto themselves are more grievous than the darkness."

Fitchburg. In November visited the almshouse: inquired the number of insane. Was answered, several, but two in close confinement, one idiotic subject. Saw an insane woman in a dreary, neglected apartment, unemployed and alone. Idleness and solitude weaken, it is said, the sane mind; much more must it hasten the downfall of that which is already trembling at the foundations. From this apartment I was conducted to an outbuilding, a portion of which was enclosed, so as to unite shelter, confinement, and solitude. The first space was a sort of entry, in which was a window; beyond, a close partition with doors indicated where was the insane man I had wished to see. He had been returned from the hospital as incurable. I asked if he was violent or dangerous. "No." "Is he clothed?" "Yes." "Why keep him shut in this close confinement?" "Oh, my husband is afraid he'll run away; then the overseers won't like it. He'll get to Worcester, and then the town will have money to pay." "He must come out; I wish to see him." The opened door disclosed a squalid place, dark, and *furnished* with straw. The crazy man raised himself slowly from the floor upon which he was couched, and with unsteady steps came toward me. His look was feeble and sad, but calm and gentle.

"Give me those books, oh, give me those books," and with trembling eagerness he reached for some books I had carried in my hand. "Do give them to me, I want them," said he with kindling earnestness. "You could not use them, friend; you

cannot see them." "Oh, give them to me, do"; and he raised his hand and bent a little forward, lowering his voice, "*I'll pick a little hole in the plank and let in some of God's light.*"

The master came round. "Why cannot you take this man abroad to work on the farm? He is harmless. Air and exercise will help to recover him." The answer was in substance the same as that first given; but he added, "I've been talking with our overseers, and I proposed getting from the blacksmith an iron collar and chain, then I can have him out by the house." An iron collar and chain! "Yes, I had a cousin up in Vermont, crazy as a wildcat, and I got a collar made for him, *and he liked it.*" "Liked it! how did he manifest his pleasure?" "Why, he left off trying to run away. I kept the almshouse at Groton. There was a man there from the hospital. I built an out-house for him, and the blacksmith made him an iron collar and chain, so we had him fast, and the overseers approved it, and"— I here interrupted him. "I have seen that poor creature at Groton in his doubly iron bondage, and you must allow me to say that, as I understand you remain but one year in the same place, and you may find insane subjects in all, I am confident, if overseers permit such a multiplication of collars and chains, the public will not long sanction such barbarities; but, if you had at Groton any argument for this measure in the violent state of the unfortunate subject, how can you justify such treatment of a person quiet and not dangerous, as is this poor man? I beg you to forbear the chains, and treat him as you yourself would like to be treated in like fallen circumstances."

Bolton. Late in December, 1842; thermometer 4° above zero; visited the almshouse; neat and comfortable establishment; two insane women, one in the house associated with the family, the other "*out of doors.*" The day following was expected a young man from Worcester Hospital, incurably insane. Fears were expressed of finding him "dreadful hard to manage." I asked to see the subject who was "out of doors"; and, following the mistress of the house through the deep snow, shuddering and benumbed by the piercing cold, several hundred yards, we came in rear of the barn to a small building, which might have afforded a degree of comfortable shelter, but it did not. About two-thirds of the interior was filled with wood and peat. The other third was divided into two parts; one about six feet square contained a cylinder stove, in which was no fire, the rusty pipe seeming to threaten, in its decay, either suffocation by smoke,

which by and by we nearly realized, or conflagration of the building, together with destruction of its poor crazy inmate. My companion uttered an exclamation at finding no fire, and busied herself to light one; while I explored, as the deficient light permitted, the cage which occupied the undescribed portion of the building. "Oh, I'm so cold, so cold," was uttered in plaintive tones by a woman within the cage; "oh, so cold, so cold!" And well might she be cold. The stout, hardy driver of the sleigh had declared 'twas too hard for a man to stand the wind and snow that day, yet here was a woman caged and imprisoned without fire or clothes, not naked, indeed, for one thin cotton garment partly covered her, and part of a blanket was gathered about the shoulders. There she stood, shivering in that dreary place; the gray locks falling in disorder about the face gave a wild expression to the pallid features. Untended and comfortless, she might call aloud, none could hear. She might die, and there be none to close the eye. But death would have been a blessing here. "Well, you shall have a fire, Axey. I've been so busy getting ready for the funeral!" One of the paupers lay dead. "Oh, I want some clothes," rejoined the lunatic; "I'm so cold." "Well, Axey, you shall have some as soon as the children come from school; I've had so much to do." "I want to go out, do let me out!" "Yes, as soon as I get time," answered the respondent. "Why do you keep her here?" I asked. "She appears harmless and quiet." "Well, I mean to take her up to the house pretty soon. The people that used to have care here kept her shut up all the year; but it *is* cold here, and we take her to the house in hard weather. The only danger is her running away. I've been meaning to this good while." The poor creature listened eagerly: "Oh, I won't run away. Do take me out!" "Well, I will in a few days." Now the smoke from the kindling fire became so dense that a new anxiety struck the captive. "Oh, I shall smother, I'm afraid. Don't fill that up, I'm afraid." Pretty soon I moved to go away. "Stop, did you walk?" "No." "Did you ride?" "Yes." "Do take me with you, do, I'm so cold. Do you know my sisters? They live in this town. I want to see them so much. Do let me go"; and, shivering with eagerness to get out, as with the biting cold, she rapidly tried the bars of the cage.

The mistress seemed a kind person. Her tones and manner to the lunatic were kind; but how difficult to unite all the cares of her household, and neglect none! Here was not wilful abuse,

but great, very great suffering through undesigned negligence. We need an asylum for this class, the incurable, where conflicting duties shall not admit of such examples of privations and misery.

One is continually amazed at the tenacity of life in these persons. In conditions that wring the heart to behold, it is hard to comprehend that days rather than years should not conclude the measure of their griefs and miseries. Picture her condition! Place yourselves in that dreary cage, remote from the inhabited dwelling, alone by day and by night, without fire, without clothes, *except when remembered;* without object or employment; weeks and months passing on in drear succession, not a blank, but with keen life to suffering; with kindred, but deserted by them; and you shall not lose the memory of that time when they loved you, and you in turn loved them, but now no act or voice of kindness makes sunshine in the heart. Has fancy realized this to you? It *may* be the state of some of those you cherish! Who shall be sure his own hearthstone shall not be so desolate? Nay, who shall say his own mountain stands strong, his lamp of reason shall not go out in darkness! To how many has this become a heart-rending reality. If for selfish ends only, should not effectual legislation here interpose?

Shelburne. November last. I found no poorhouse, and but few paupers. These were distributed in private families. I had heard, before visiting this place, of the bad condition of a lunatic pauper. The case seemed to be pretty well known throughout the county. Receiving a direction by which I might find him, I reached a house of most respectable appearance, everything without and within indicating abundance and prosperity. Concluding I must have mistaken my way, I prudently inquired where the insane person might be found. I was readily answered, "Here." I desired to see him; and, after some difficulties raised and set aside, I was conducted into the yard, where was a small building of rough boards imperfectly joined. Through these crevices was admitted what portion of heaven's light and air was allowed by man to his fellow-man. This shanty or shell enclosing a cage might have been eight or ten feet square. I think it did not exceed. A narrow passage within allowed to pass in front of the cage. It was very cold. The air within was burdened with the most noisome vapors, and desolation with misery seemed here to have settled their abode. All was still, save now and then a low groan. The person who conducted

me tried, with a stick, to rouse the inmate. I entreated her to desist, the twilight of the place making it difficult to discern anything within the cage. There at last I saw a human being, partially extended, cast upon his back, amidst a mass of filth, the sole furnishing, whether for comfort or necessity, which the place afforded. There he lay, ghastly, with upturned, glazed eyes and fixed gaze, heavy breathings, interrupted only by faint groans, which seemed symptomatic of an approaching termination of his sufferings. Not so thought the mistress. "He has all sorts of ways. He'll soon rouse up and be noisy enough. He'll scream and beat about the place like any wild beast half the time." "And cannot you make him more comfortable? Can he not have some clean, dry place and a fire?" "As for clean, it will do no good. He's cleaned out now and then; but what's the use for such a creature? His own brother tried him once, but got sick enough of the bargain." "But a fire: there is space even here for a small box stove." "If he had a fire, he'd only pull off his clothes, so it's no use." "But you say your husband takes care of him, and he is shut in here in almost total darkness, so that seems a less evil than that he should lie there to perish in that horrible condition." I made no impression. It was plain that to keep him securely confined from escape was the chief object. "How do you give him his food? I see no means for introducing anything here." "Oh," pointing to the floor, "one of the bars is cut shorter there: we push it through there." "There? Impossible! You cannot do that. You would not treat your lowest dumb animals with that disregard *to decency!*" "As for what he eats or where he eats, it makes no difference to him. He'd as soon swallow one thing as another."

Newton. It was a cold morning in October last that I visited the almshouse. The building itself is ill-adapted for the purposes to which it is appropriated. The town, I understand, have in consideration a more advantageous location, and propose to erect more commodious dwellings. The mistress of the house informed me that they had several insane inmates, some of them very bad. In reply to my request to see them she objected "that they were not fit; they were not cleaned; that they were very crazy," etc. Urging my request more decidedly, she said they should be got ready if I would wait. Still no order was given which would hasten my object. I resumed the subject, when, with manifest unwillingness, she called to a colored man, a cripple, who, with several others of the poor,

was employed in the yard, to go and get a woman up, naming her. I waited some time at the kitchen door to see what all this was to produce. The man slowly proceeded to the remote part of the wood-shed where, part being divided from the open space, were two small rooms, in the outer of which he slept and lived, as I understood. There was his furniture, and there his charge. Opening into this room only was the second, which was occupied by a woman, not old, and furiously mad. It contained a wooden bunk filled with filthy straw, the room itself a counterpart to the lodging-place. Inexpressibly disgusting and loathsome was all; but the inmate herself was even more horribly repelling. She rushed out, as far as the chains would allow, almost in a state of nudity, exposed to a dozen persons, and vociferating at the top of her voice, pouring forth such a flood of indecent language as might corrupt even Newgate. I entreated the man, who was still there, to go out and close the door. He refused. That was *his place!* Sick, horror-struck, and almost incapable of retreating, I gained the outer air, and hastened to see the other subject, to remove from a scene so outraging all decency and humanity. In the apartment over that last described was a crazy man, I was told. I ascended the stairs in the woodshed, and, passing through a small room, stood at the entrance of the one occupied,—occupied with what? The furniture was a wooden box or bunk containing straw, and something I was told was a man,—I could not tell, as likely it might have been a wild animal,—half-buried in the offensive mass that made his bed, his countenance concealed by long, tangled hair and unshorn beard. He lay sleeping. Filth, neglect, and misery reigned there. I begged he might not be roused. If sleep could visit a wretch so forlorn, how merciless to break the slumber! Protruding from the foot of the box was—nay, it could not be the feet; yet from these stumps, these maimed members, were swinging chains, fastened to the side of the building. I descended. The master of the house briefly stated the history of these two victims of wretchedness. The old man had been crazy about twenty years. As, till within a late period, the town had owned no farm for the poor, this man, with others, had been annually put up at auction. I hope there is nothing offensive in the idea of these *annual sales* of old men and women, —the sick, the infirm, and the helpless, the middle-aged, and children. Why should we not *sell* people as well as otherwise blot out human rights: it is only being *consistent*, surely not worse

than chaining and caging naked lunatics upon public roads or burying them in closets and cellars! But, as I was saying, the crazy man was annually sold to some new master; and a few winters since, being kept in an out-house, the people within, being warmed and clothed, "did not reckon how cold it was"; and so his feet froze. Were chains now the more necessary? He cannot run. But he might *crawl* forth, and in his transports of frenzy "do some damage."

That young woman,—her lot is most appalling. Who shall dare describe it? Who shall have courage or hardihood to write her history? That young woman was the child of respectable, hard-working parents. The girl became insane. The father, a farmer, with small means from a narrow income had placed her at the State Hospital. There, said my informer, she remained as long as he could by any means pay her expenses. Then, then only, he resigned her to the care of the town, to those who are, in the eye of the law, the guardians of the poor and needy. She was placed with the other town paupers, and given in charge to a man. I assert boldly, as truly, that I have given but a *faint representation* of what she was, and what was her condition as I saw her last autumn. Written language is weak to declare it.

Could we in fancy place ourselves in the situation of some of these poor wretches, bereft of reason, deserted of friends, hopeless, troubles without, and more dreary troubles within, overwhelming the wreck of the mind as "a wide breaking in of the waters,"—how should we, as the terrible illusion was cast off, not only offer the thank-offering of prayer, that so mighty a destruction had not overwhelmed our mental nature, but as an offering more acceptable devote ourselves to alleviate that state from which we are so mercifully spared?

It may not appear much more credible than the fact above stated, that a few months since a young woman in a state of complete insanity was confined entirely naked in a pen or stall in a barn. There, unfurnished with clothes, without bed and without fire, she was left—but not alone. Profligate men and idle boys had access to the den, whenever curiosity or vulgarity prompted. She is now removed into the house with other paupers; and for this humanizing benefit she was indebted to the remonstrances, in the first instance, *of an insane man.*

Another town now owns a poorhouse, which I visited, and am glad to testify to the present comfortable state of the inmates;

but there the only provision the house affords for an insane person, should one, as is not improbable, be conveyed there, is a closet in the cellar, formed by the arch upon which the chimney rests. This has a close door, not only securing the prisoners, but excluding what of light and pure air might else find admission.

Abuses assuredly cannot always or altogether be guarded against; but, if in the civil and social relations all shall have "done what they could," no ampler justification will be demanded at the great tribunal.

Of the dangers and mischiefs sometimes following the location of insane persons in our almshouses, I will record but one more example. In Worcester has for several years resided a young woman, a lunatic pauper of decent life and respectable family. I have seen her as she usually appeared, listless and silent, almost or quite sunk into a state of dementia, sitting one amidst the family, "but not of them." A few weeks since, revisiting that almshouse, judge my horror and amazement to see her negligently bearing in her arms a young infant, of which I was told she was the unconscious parent. Who was the father, none could or would declare. Disqualified for the performance of maternal cares and duties, regarding the helpless little creature with a perplexed or indifferent gaze, she sat a silent, but, oh, how eloquent, a pleader for the protection of others of her neglected and outraged sex! Details of that black story would not strengthen the cause. Needs it a mightier plea than the sight of that forlorn creature and her wailing infant? Poor little child, more than orphan from birth, in this unfriendly world! A demented mother, a father on whom the sun might blush or refuse to shine!

Men of Massachusetts, I beg, I implore, I demand pity and protection for these of my suffering, outraged sex. Fathers, husbands, brothers, I would supplicate you for this boon; but what do I say? I dishonor you, divest you at once of Christianity and humanity, does this appeal imply distrust. If it comes burdened with a doubt of your righteousness in this legislation, then blot it out; while I declare confidence in your honor, not less than your humanity. Here you will put away the cold, calculating spirit of selfishness and self-seeking; lay off the armor of local strife and political opposition; here and now, for once, forgetful of the earthly and perishable, come up to these halls and consecrate them with one heart and one

mind to works of righteousness and just judgment. Become the benefactors of your race, the just guardians of the solemn rights you hold in trust. Raise up the fallen, succor the desolate, restore the outcast, defend the helpless, and for your eternal and great reward receive the benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servants, become rulers over many things!"

But, gentlemen, I do not come to quicken your sensibilities into short-lived action, to pour forth passionate exclamation, nor yet to move your indignation against those whose misfortune, not fault, it surely is to hold in charge these poor demented creatures, and whose whole of domestic economy or prison discipline is absolutely overthrown by such proximity of conflicting circumstances and opposite conditions of mind and character. Allow me to illustrate this position by a few examples: it were easy to produce hundreds.

The master of one of the best-regulated almshouses, namely, that of Plymouth, where every arrangement shows that the comfort of the sick, the aged, and the infirm, is suitably cared for, and the amendment of the unworthy is studied and advanced, said, as we stood opposite a latticed stall where was confined a madman, that the hours of the day were few when the whole household was not distracted from employment by screams and turbulent stampings, and every form of violence which the voice or muscular force could produce. This unfortunate being was one of the "returned incurables," since whose last admission to the almshouse they were no longer secure of peace for the aged or decency for the young. It was morally impossible to do justice to the sane and insane in such improper vicinity to each other. The conviction is continually deepened that hospitals are the only places where insane persons can be at once humanely and properly controlled. Poorhouses converted into madhouses cease to effect the purposes for which they were established, and instead of being asylums for the aged, the homeless, and the friendless, and places of refuge for orphaned or neglected childhood, are transformed into perpetual bedlams.

This crying evil and abuse of institutions is not confined to our almshouses. The warden of a populous prison near this metropolis, populous not with criminals only, but with the insane in almost every stage of insanity, and the idiotic in descending states from silly and simple, to helpless and speechless, has declared that, since their admission under the Revised Statutes of 1835, page 382, "the prison has often more resembled the in-

fernal regions than any place on earth!" And, what with the excitement inevitably produced by the crowded state of the prisons and multiplying causes, not subject to much modification, there has been neither peace nor order one hour of the twenty-four. If ten were quiet, the residue were probably raving. Almost without interval might, and *must*, these be heard, blaspheming and furious, and to the last degree impure and indecent, uttering language from which the base and the profligate have turned shuddering aside and the abandoned have shrunk abashed. I myself, with many beside, can bear sad witness to these things.

Such cases of transcendent madness have not been few in this prison. Admission for a portion of them, not already having been discharged as incurable from the State Hospital, has been sought with importunity and pressed with obstinate perseverance, often without success or advantage; and it has not been till application has followed application, and petition succeeded petition, that the judge of probate, absolutely wearied by the "continual coming," has sometimes granted warrants for removal. It cannot be overlooked that in this delay or refusal was more of just deliberation than hardness; for it is well known that, in the present crowded state of the hospital, every new patient displaces one who has for a longer or a shorter time received the benefit of that noble institution.

A few months since, through exceeding effort, an inmate of this prison, whose contaminating influence for two years had been the dread and curse of all persons who came within her sphere, whether incidentally or compelled by imprisonment, or by daily duty, was removed to Worcester. She had set at defiance all efforts for controlling the contaminating violence of her excited passions; every variety of blasphemous expression, every form of polluting phraseology, was poured forth in torrents, sweeping away every decent thought, and giving reality to that blackness of darkness which, it is said, might convert a heaven into a hell. There, day after day, month after month, were the warden and his own immediate household; the subordinate officials, and casual visitors; young women detained as witnesses; men, women, and children, waiting trial or under sentence; debtors and criminals; the neighborhood, and almost the whole town, subjected to this monstrous offence—*and no help!* the *law* permitted her there, and there she remained till July last, when, after an application to the judge so determined

that all refusal was refused, a warrant was granted for her transfer to the State Hospital. I saw her there two weeks since. What a change! Decent, orderly, neatly dressed, capable of light employment, partaking with others her daily meals. Decorously, and without any manifestation of passion, moving about, not a rational woman by any means, but no longer a nuisance, rending off her garments and tainting the moral atmosphere with every pollution, she exhibited how much could be done for the most unsettled and apparently the most hopeless cases by being placed in a situation adapted to the wants and necessities of her condition. Transformed from a very Tisiphone, she is now a controllable woman. But this most wonderful change may not be lasting. She is liable to be returned to the prison, as have been others, and then no question but in a short time like scenes will distract and torment all in a vicinity so much to be dreaded.

Already has been transferred from Worcester to Concord a furious man, last July conveyed to the hospital from Cambridge, whose violence is second only to that of the subject above described. While our *Revised Statutes* permit the incarceration of madmen and madwomen, epileptics and idiots, in prisons, all responsible officers should, in ordinary justice, be exonerated from obligation to maintain prison discipline. And the fact is conclusive, if the injustice to prison officers is great, it is equally great toward prisoners; an additional penalty to a legal sentence pronounced in a court of justice, which might, we should think, in all the prisons we have visited, serve as a sound plea for false imprisonment. If reform is intended to be united with punishment, there never was a greater absurdity than to look for moral restoration under such circumstances; and, if that is left out of view, we know no rendering of the law which sanctions such a cruel and oppressive aggravation of the circumstances of imprisonment as to expose these prisoners day and night to the indescribable horrors of such association.

The greatest evils in regard to the insane and idiots in the prisons of this Commonwealth are found at Ipswich and Cambridge, and distinguish these places only, as I believe, because the numbers are larger, being more than twenty in each. Ipswich has the advantage over Cambridge in having fewer furious subjects, and in the construction of the buildings, though these are so bad as to have afforded cause for presentment by the grand jury some time since. It is said that the new County House, in progress of building, will meet the exigencies of the case.

If it is meant that the wing in the new prison, to be appropriated to the insane, will provide accommodation for all the insane and idiotic paupers in the county, I can only say that it could receive no more than can be gathered in the three towns of Salem, Newburyport, and Ipswich, supposing these are to be removed, there being in Ipswich twenty-two in the prison and eight in the almshouse; in Salem almshouse, seventeen uniformly crazy, and two part of the time deranged; and in that of Newburyport eleven, including idiots. Here at once are sixty. The returns of 1842 exhibit an aggregate of one hundred and thirty-five. Provision is made in the new prison for fifty-seven of this class, leaving seventy-eight unprovided for, except in the almshouses. From such a fate, so far as Danvers, Saugus, East Bradford, and some other towns in the county reveal conditions of insane subjects, we pray they may be exempt.

I have the verbal and written testimony of many officers of this Commonwealth, who are respectable alike for their integrity and the fidelity with which they discharge their official duties, and whose opinions, based on experience, are entitled to consideration, that the occupation of prisons for the detention of lunatics and of idiots is, under all circumstances, an evil, subversive alike of good order, strict discipline, and good morals. I transcribe a few passages which will place this mischief in its true light. The sheriff of Plymouth County writes as follows: "I am decidedly of the opinion that the county jail is a very improper place for lunatics and idiots. The last summer its bad effects were fully realized here, not only by the prisoners in jail, but the disturbance extended to the inhabitants dwelling in the neighborhood. A foreigner was sentenced by a justice of the peace to thirty days' confinement in the house of correction. He was to all appearance a lunatic or madman. He destroyed every article in his room, even to his wearing apparel, his noise and disturbance was incessant for hours, day and night. I consider prisons places for the safe keeping of prisoners, and all these are equally entitled to humane treatment from their keepers, without regard to the cause of commitment. We have in jails no conveniences to make the situation of lunatics and idiots much more decent than would be necessary for the brute creation, and impossible to prevent the disturbance of the inmates under the same roof."

In relation to the confinement of the insane in prisons the sheriff of Hampshire County writes as follows:—

"I concur fully in the sentiments entertained by you in relation to this unwise, not to say inhuman, provision of our law (see Rev. Stat. 382) authorizing the commitment of lunatics to our jails and houses of correction. Our jails preclude occupation, and our houses of correction cannot admit of that variety of pursuit, and its requisite supervision, so indispensable to these unfortunates. Indeed, this feature of our law seems to me a relic of that ancient barbarism which regarded misfortune as a crime, and those bereft of reason as also bereft of all sensibility, as having forfeited not only all title to compassion, but to *humanity*, and consigned them without a tear of sympathy, or twinge of remorse, or even a suspicion of injustice, to the companionship of the vicious, the custody of the coarse and ignorant, and the horrors of the hopeless dungeon. I cannot persuade myself that anything more than a motion by any member of our Legislature is necessary to effect an immediate repeal of this odious provision."

The sheriff of Berkshire says, conclusively, that "jails and houses of correction *cannot* be so managed as to render them suitable places of confinement for that unfortunate class of persons who are the subjects of your inquiries, and who, never having violated the law, should not be ranked with felons or confined within the same walls with them. Jailers and overseers of houses of correction, whenever well qualified for the management of criminals, do not usually possess those peculiar qualifications required in those to whom should be intrusted the care of lunatics."

A letter from the surgeon and physician of the Prison Hospital at Cambridge, whose observation and experience have laid the foundation of his opinions, and who hence has a title to speak with authority, affords the following views: "On this subject, it seems to me, there can be but one opinion. No one can be more impressed than I am with the great injustice done to the insane by confining them in jails and houses of correction. It must be revolting to the better feelings of every one to see the innocent and unfortunate insane occupying apartments with or consigned to those occupied by the criminal. Some of the insane are conscious of the circumstances in which they are placed, and feel the degradation. They exclaim sometimes in their ravings, and sometimes in their lucid intervals, "What have *I* done that I must be shut up in jail?" and "Why do you not let me out?" This state of things unquestionably retards the recovery of the few who do recover their reason under such circumstances, and

may render those permanently insane who under other circumstances might have been restored to their right mind. There is also in our jails very little opportunity for the classification of the insane. The quiet and orderly must in many cases occupy the same rooms with the restless and noisy,—another great hindrance to recovery.

"*Injustice* is also done to the *convicts:* it is certainly very wrong that they should be doomed day after day and night after night to listen to the ravings of madmen and madwomen. This is a kind of punishment that is not recognized by our statutes, and is what the criminal ought not to be called upon to undergo. The confinement of the criminal and of the insane in the same building is subversive of that good order and discipline which should be observed in every well-regulated prison. I do most sincerely hope that more permanent provision will be made for the pauper insane by the State, either to restore Worcester Insane Asylum to what it was originally designed to be or else make some just appropriation for the benefit of this very unfortunate class of our 'fellow-beings.'"

From the efficient sheriff of Middlesex County I have a letter upon this subject, from which I make such extracts as my limits permit: "I do not consider it right, just, or humane, to hold for safe keeping, in the county jails and houses of correction, persons classing as lunatics or idiots. Our prisons are not constructed with a view to the proper accommodation of this class of persons. Their interior arrangements are such as to render it very difficult, if not impossible, to extend to such persons that care and constant oversight which their peculiarly unfortunate condition absolutely demands; and, besides, the occupation of prisons for lunatics is unquestionably subversive of discipline, comfort, and good order. Prisoners are thereby subjected to unjust aggravation of necessary confinement by being exposed to an almost constant disquiet from the restless or raving lunatic. You inquire whether 'it may not justly be said that the qualifications for wardenship, or for the offices of overseer, do not usually embrace qualifications for the management of lunatics, whether regarded as curable or incurably lost to reason,' and also whether 'the government of jails and houses of correction for the detention or punishment of offenders and criminals can suitably be united with the government and discipline fitted for the most unfortunate and friendless of the human race; namely, pauper lunatics and idiots, a class not condemned

by the laws, and I must add not mercifully protected by them.' The first of the preceding questions I answer in the *affirmative*, the last *negatively*." [Here follow similar testimonies from the warden of the Cambridge prison, the sheriff of Dukes County, the warden of the prison at South Boston, and the master of the Plymouth almshouse.]

It is not few, but many, it is not a part, but the whole, who bear unqualified testimony to this evil. A voice strong and deep comes up from every almshouse and prison in Massachusetts where the insane are or have been protesting against such evils as have been illustrated in the preceding pages.

Gentlemen, I commit to you this sacred cause. Your action upon this subject will affect the present and future condition of hundreds and of thousands.

In this legislation, as in all things, may you exercise that "wisdom which is the breath of the power of God."

Respectfully submitted,

D. L. DIX.

85 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston.
January, 1843.

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